



The Great Chess Skirmish at Crossroads

By Lynn Terpstra

"The only thing chess players have in common is chess." Lodewijk Prins, interview with Max Pam, 1972

When a knock-down, drag-out fistfight broke out at the Crossroads Giant Chess Set in late summer of 1996, I was preparing to leave town for a four day work trip. As Director of Marketing, I asked the Crossroads Maintenance Department to remove the giant chess pieces from the floor and put up a sign inviting all chess players to a meeting in the Community Room upon my return the following week.

By the time I returned, the property manager had been interviewed by two local TV stations and many more print journalists had penned stories about how the giant chess pieces had been taken away by Crossroads Management and that chess players mourned its loss and wondered when they would return. Jim Vesely, columnist for the Seattle Times wrote on Monday, Sept. 9, 1996: "The Great Chess Skirmish at the Crossroads mall in Bellevue is one of those little glimpses into what gets people steamed that can also act as a metaphor for something larger."

I was a little surprised by all the attention. Tempers had been known to flare up at the giant chess area but nothing violent had ever happened. Giant chess sets are a familiar sight in many European cities, in city parks and plazas where competition mingles with sociability and experienced players challenge all comers. New York City's Washington Square is well known for its built-in chess tables. The giant chess set was built for Crossroads in 1988 after a company employee had observed a giant chess set at a shopping center in Vancouver, BC. Crossroads Developer (and my wonderful boss for 21 years), Ron Sher, ever tuned-in to creating engaging gathering spaces, commissioned a local wood-carver to design a chess set for Crossroads. The chess



set attracted legions of players, young and old, and throngs of spectators. Table chess games were encouraged by the addition of tables near the giant chess set. Photos of the chess set became iconic images for Crossroads.

In crafting intentional gathering places, we paid close attention to how the spaces were actually used, posting no proscriptive or negative signs unless safety was at issue. Over the years, chess issues emerged. Chess players asked us for a chess clock and a white board for game sign-ups; we built them a cabinet

with clock and white board and tried to keep fresh batteries in the clock and dry-erase pens at the white board. The chess set at Crossroads became a hang-out and part of the unique cachet that is Crossroads. Taking away the chess pieces was a drastic action.

The meeting was held on a weekday afternoon. Over 40 chess players (mostly men) showed up. Representing Crossroads were the property manager, the Crossroads Security Director and me. The room was filled with anxiety and emotion. Players wanted their chess pieces back and we wanted the chess area to be restored as a convivial part of Crossroads.

While I can't remember the discussion in detail, we started out by explaining to the players that the unacceptable behavior of a few people was the reason we had removed the pieces. Response varied from anger to remorse. A few players acted as if we had taken away one of their basic rights. (I remember thinking unkind thoughts such as 'what makes you think that this is a democracy? The chess set is a free amenity on private property for the enjoyment of customers.') Clearly there was enough self-righteousness to go around. An edict

from Management would have ‘solved’ the immediate problem but I believe that we recognized that we had the opportunity to create something more durable and community-friendly than just a set of rules.

As the meeting progressed, I noticed that there was a gradual shift on all sides from blame and anger towards HOW to solve the problem and restore peace to the area. We all had to acknowledge that the chess set was very important to the players and that they had a vested interest in the outcome of this problem.

The solution that emerged was for the group to craft the rules themselves! Rather than Crossroads Management imposing the rules on the players, a smaller committee of volunteers took up the task of writing a set of rules. We met again a few times, tweaked the rules, made agreements, and printed the signs. If you visit the Crossroads chess area these days you’ll see the same set of rules in effect. They were authentic, a collaborative process from the hearts and minds of all and they have worked for thirteen years now. There is unstated but very real stewardship amongst the chess community to maintain civility in the chess area. I still chuckle when I recall walking past the chess area after the incident; a group of chess players all joined their hands and grinned at me! Men in peace!

There was so much to be learned from this experience for everyone. I feel so privileged and honored to have been a part of it. We had no awareness of the mediation process but intuitively, everyone was seen and heard and instead of solving the problem for them, in a moment of wisdom, we let the group create their own solution. We trusted the process. It wasn’t about us at all and the chess area at Crossroads is now a model of civility, of the universal language that is chess. A great place to be!

September 11 — A National Day of Service

In April, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act which, for the first time, officially recognizes September 11 as a National Day of Service and Remembrance under the 2009 Serve America Act. For more information on the President’s Call to Service, visit www.serve.gov. The City of Bellevue posts a Community Volunteering Guide, which lists hundreds of volunteering opportunities in Bellevue and throughout the community. You can check out the guide at www.bellevuewa.gov/volunteer and click on the Community Volunteering Guide. For more information on Bellevue Volunteering, email volunteer@bellevuewa.gov

Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Starts Using the Language Line

By Ying Carlson

Monday morning, you are sitting in the office getting your day started. Suddenly the phone rings, the person on the other end says: “Hello? Can help me? Vietnam ... Vietnamese?” Obviously, the person is trying so hard to communicate in broken English. You panic, and think to yourself “What should I do? I don’t speak Vietnamese. Think quickly! Do I know someone who does...?” And, in those awkward 10 seconds, before you can respond, that person hangs up. You can almost see the disappointment in the person’s face.

Friday afternoon, somebody comes into Mediation seeking for help. The person is trying to tell you his situation in English, but the accent is so strong and after a few attempts, he is embarrassed and frustrated, and so are you.

So what can you do the next time this happens? Use the Language Line Phone! The Language Line is an over-the-phone-interpretation service. It can connect you with an interpreter in seconds and you can then communicate with customers in more than 170 languages over the phone or in person! Here is how it works.

If they call:

Step 1: Put the customer on hold

Step 2: Press **Conference** on your phone

Step 3: Call **1-866-874-3972**

Step 4: Enter **Client ID *** (available in office)**

Step 5: Press 1 for Spanish and 2 for other languages (you will be asked to say the name of the desired language, an interpreter will be connected)

Step 6: Press **Conference** again to add the customer to the line

If they come in person:

Come to the Neighborhood Resource Center and use the “Dual Handset Telephone”

Step 1: Hand one handset to the customer and you keep the other one

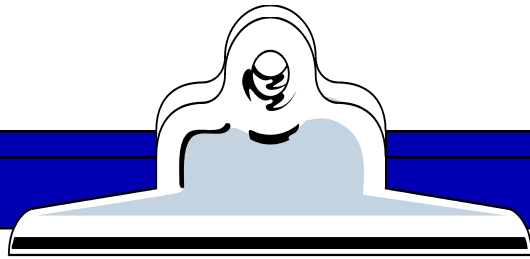
Step 2: Press the red **Interpreter** button on your phone

Step 3: Press 1 for Spanish and 2 for other languages

Step 4: Say the language name

Step 5: Press the white **Client ID** button and an interpreter will be connected.

Questions? Concerns? Call Ying Carlson at extension 4342 or come to the Neighborhood Resource Center to try out the service yourself. For more tips and tools on communicating with limited English customers, please visit the Language Resource Guide on the City intranet at <http://cobnet/pcd/Language%20Resource%20Handbook/Language%20Resource%20Handbook.htm>



Parent—Teen Update

By
Cathy Goldman

I hope you all had a great summer. We did have some record high temperatures! I hope you all stayed cool somehow! I am excited about a new school year! We have a great group of volunteers on board! My goal is to create opportunities for you to mediate and present skills to the community.



Please join us on September 9th at 6 pm in room 112 for a "Refresher Mediation Course." This in-service is designed to refresh you on the mediation process and skills! We will include challenges to dealing with parents and teens in conflict.

I am in the process of putting together some exciting in-service trainings for this coming school year. I will e mail you the dates as I confirm topics and presenters.

Thanks for all your warm wishes during my recovery from my recent bike accident. I am healing well!

BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators

Parent-Teen In-Service Trainings: Refresher Mediation Course

with Cathy Goldman
Wed. Sept. 9th, from 6-8 PM in room 1E-112

Family Systems

with Laurie Slater
Wed. Oct. 14th, from 6-8 PM in room 1E-112

Neighborhood In-Service Trainings: Mindfulness for Mediators

with Gwen Jones
Tues. Sept. 22nd, from 6:30-8 PM in Room 1E-112

Code Compliance

with Gerry Miyazaki, Code Compliance Office
Tues. Oct. 20th, from 6:30-8 PM in Room 1E-120

Training:

Conciliation Training Fall 2009

Thurs. Nov. 5th and Thurs. Nov. 12th
from 9 AM—5 PM in Room 1E-121

Con/Med Consultation Group:

Join us to discuss your current conciliations/mediations or questions. Great networking and learning opportunity. Open to all volunteers. Tuesday, October 13th, 11:30 AM—1 PM Room 1E-119.

VOLUNTEER NEWS

New Conciliator:

David Gorney

Moved into observation phase:

Catherine Zimmerman

Graduated from practicum:

Maria Victoria

Gwen Jones

Program Staff:

Program Co-Manager:	Cheryl Cohen	-	452-5222
Program Co-Manager:	Andrew Kidde	-	452-5288
Program Assistant	Gwen Jones	-	452-2897
Parent-Teen Coordinator:	Cathy Goldman	-	452-4091

City of Bellevue website: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov>
(Look for the Mediation Program under "Neighborhood Information")

Volunteer Profile:

Tom Fouche



Tom was born in Bellevue and has lived here ever since. He currently attends the International School as a Senior. Tom loves to ski and travel, and hopes to study abroad in college. He was trained in Parent-Teen Mediation the summer before his sophomore year and has mediated several times since then. He has found the experience rewarding and intriguing, and though he most likely will not pursue a career in mediation, Tom will definitely use the mediation skills he has learned in the future.



City of Bellevue Department of Planning and Community Development
P.O. Box 90012 Bellevue, WA 98009-9012